

Thorns 'n Roses

From community submissions



Roses to:

The Stuttgart Health Clinic and Pharmacy for the professional, prompt and courteous service I received after I let my heart medication run out.

Led by Lt. Col. Robin Benckart, the clinic staff went above and beyond "current retiree policy" to get me back to normal – on a Friday afternoon, no less.

The 6th ASG Youth Services sports staff for an outstanding job during the YS soccer season. The staff members' dedication and hard work made the season a very successful one.

Not only did they have many soccer fields and schedules to prepare for games, but they also prepared the Panzer football field for Patch High School's homecoming game. Rain or shine, they got the job done and always made sure our children had the best possible fields to play on.

The Patch residents who showed their Halloween spirit and came through for all the trick-or-treaters. Thanks also to AAFES for the free homemade cookies in the food court – a very nice touch.

E-mail comments to citizen@6asg.army.mil or fax them to 421-2570/civ. 0711-729-2570.

CORRECTION

The advertisement for the Great American Smokeout Fun Run/Walk on page 2 of our Nov. 4 edition contained an incorrect date. The event begins Nov. 20, 7:30 a.m., at the Patch Barracks Fitness Center.

It's never just a number

By Richard M. Arndt
Commentary

As the body count of U.S. service members killed in Iraq continues to climb, I fear the American public will begin to see those brave souls as mere numbers in a tragic tally.

The stories that air on the evening news seem remarkably similar: a rocket-propelled grenade here, a sniper's bullet there. It all becomes familiar, even expected after a while.

I know the families don't expect it, because in 1996, I had the task of informing a couple that their son, an Army noncommissioned officer, had been murdered.

The call came at 6 a.m. Saturday. I shook the sleep from my head as I showered and shaved, and I was already starting to get nervous as I donned my Class As. How was I going to face this family?

I still remember the words of the casualty affairs NCO on duty as I picked up the briefing packet in his office: "You're going to do this just fine, Sergeant Arndt," he said. "This is a fellow NCO's family. He needs you to do this."

Along drive later, I pulled into a short driveway leading to a small, single-story house. A neighbor was working on his car in the driveway next door.

He eyed me up and down, and asked, "Their son's alright, isn't he?" When I

Every time I hear about a service member killed in Iraq, I remember Mrs. Smith. I remember the horror, the profound sadness and the sympathy in her eyes.

didn't respond, he turned visibly pale. "Oh no..." he said.

I knocked on the door with my hat in my hand and my heart in my throat. The door opened, and a 50-something lady looked out at me. She knew when she opened the door what my presence meant.

The look of horror on her face made me stammer as I asked, "Are you Mrs. Smith?" She nodded, a tear forming in the corner of her eye. "I have news about your son," I said. "May I come in?"

The rest of the words I said that day are a blur. I remember Mrs. Smith's sobs and tears, and Mr. Smith's stoic resolution to be strong for his wife, even as his heart was breaking. I remember my own tears as I struggled futilely for words that would help ease this family's grief.

As I was explaining what the Smiths could expect over the coming days, Mrs. Smith looked at me suddenly, and asked if I knew her son. When I told her that I did not, her eyes filled with tears once more as she leaned forward and hugged me. "You poor thing," she said. "What

an awful thing to have to do."

I was shocked. I had just told this woman that her son was dead, and she was feeling sympathy for me for having to be the one to break the news. I struggled for a response.

"It's my duty, Ma'am," I managed. "It's the least I can do for your son."

She leaned back and looked at me. "Thank you," she said.

Some moments in life you never forget. Every time I hear a news report about a service member killed in Iraq, I remember Mrs. Smith. I remember the horror, the profound sadness, and the sympathy in her eyes.

For those who haven't known a Mrs. Smith, those news reports may seem like numbers. Those who have seen the human side of the reports know that they're not. I can only hope that the American public knows the difference, for the sake of all our service members – and their mothers.

Arndt is editor of the Belvoir Eagle newspaper at Fort Belvoir, Va.

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ON THE STREET

What is the best way for the United States to honor its military veterans?

(For full coverage of Veterans Day in Stuttgart see page 13.)



Angela Cross
(Civilian)

"Make sure they have the benefits that they deserve."



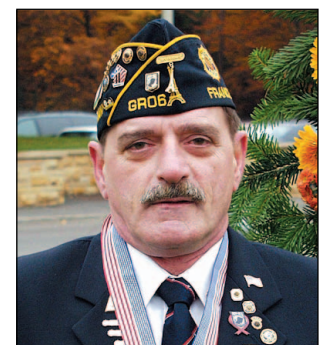
Master Sgt.
Rodney Amnotte
(Air Force)

"Get to know those who served and are serving."



Bertha Sanders
(Civilian)

"Remember their beliefs in making this country better and stronger."



Fred Wildi
(American Legion)

"Support them openly. Show them you're there and you care."



Lt. Col.
William Robinson
(Army)

"Take a minute to think about those who sacrifice their lives to keep our country free."



Adriana Poole
(PHS student)

"They risk their lives for us and they deserve all their benefits."



Master Sgt. Max Klinger
(Army)

"Support the troops wherever they are – especially in times of conflict."



Sgt. 1st Class
Harry Campbell
(Army)

"Wear an American flag lapel pin and put a yellow ribbon around a tree."